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MR. P. B. PORTER'S SPEECH

ON

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

ON

THE EIGHTH FEBRUARY, 1810.

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I HAVE risen, sir, for the purpose of asking the attention of the House to a subject, than which, I may confidently say, there is no one that regards our domestic policy, more important; or which more loudly calls for the interposition of the national legislature.

The subject to which I allude, is the internal improvement of the United States, by roads and canals: And I intend, before I sit down, to offer a resolution, the object of which will be to ascertain the sense of the House in relation to the expediency of appropriating a part of the public lands to such improvements.

I am not in the habit of trespassing upon the patience of the House, and I am sure no apology will be required for the time I may occupy in presenting such general views of this subject, as the importance of it seems, in my opinion, to demand. I know that the time of the House is precious. I am aware that there are many matters connected with our foreign relations, that have strong claims to its attention; but they surely ought not to exclude every other subject of legislation. I have the honor to represent a portion of the country which is perhaps as little affected by our exterior commercial relations as any part of the United States; and yet I listen, with great attention and interest, to the various plans and propositions which are daily submitted and discussed in this House, and with which indeed its time is almost exclusively occupied, for the protection and security of commerce; and I trust that I shall shew by my vote, on every proper occasion, that I consider my constituents as bound to support with their persons and their property, and to the last extremity, the just rights of the merchants of this country. On the other hand, I have a right to expect that the gentlemen who represent the mercantile interest will not only hear

with patience the proposition I am about to submit, but that they will thank me for the fair opportunity I intend to afford them, of proving the sincerity of those professions which we hear so often and so loudly made on this floor, in favor of the agricultural interest. The gentlemen tell us that commerce is only the *hand maid* of agriculture; and that their zeal to protect commerce arises merely from a desire to promote, through its instrumentality, the great interests of agriculture. I shall not question the sincerity of these declarations, nor the correctness of the principle they assert; but it is to be presumed that the gentlemen will be as willing to give a direct encouragement to agriculture, as to do it indirectly through the medium of commerce.

It will be recollected that a bill was some days ago laid on your table, from the Senate, embracing the subject of roads and canals. What course this bill has already taken, or what may be its ultimate fate in that House, were it possible for me to conjecture, it would be improper for me to state in this place; especially in the present state of my feelings on that subject. I mention this bill only because I had some little share in producing it in the form in which it appears on your tables, and in which it *originally* appeared in the Senate; and because it therefore shews my ideas of a practical mode of carrying the objects of the resolution into effect. And I must beg the House to bear in mind the provisions of that bill, in weighing the observations which I am about to offer; should these observations be so fortunate as to gain the ear of the House.

It is possible that some of the views which I am about to take of this subject, may be considered as too extravagant and remote; and that they may at first even wear the appearance of affectation. I hope however, it will be recollected that the subject is in itself of vast magnitude and extent; and that in order to speak of it with any degree of justice, it will be necessary to consider it in reference to the great and correspondent effects which it is calculated to produce. And permit me, in the first place, to say, sir, that *some* great system of internal navigation, such as is contemplated in the bill introduced into the Senate, is not only an object of the first consequence to the future prosperity of this country, considered as a measure of political economy; but as a measure of state policy, it is indispensable to the preservation of the integrity of this government.

The United States have for twenty years past been favored in their external commerce, in a manner unequalled perhaps in the history of the world. Our citizens have not only grown rich, but they have gone almost mad in pursuit of this commerce. Such have been its temptations, as to engage in it almost the whole of the floating capital of the country, and a great part of

its enterprize ; and every other occupation has been considered as secondary and subordinate. This extraordinary success of commerce has been owing partly to our local situation, partly to the native enterprise of our citizens, but primarily to the unparalleled succession of events in Europe. The course of these events, before so propitious to our interests, has of late, very materially changed, and with it has changed the tide of our commercial prosperity. I am far, however, from believing that this sudden reverse may not eventually prove fortunate for the true interests of the United States. The embarrassments which the belligerents have thrown in the way of our external commerce, have turned the attention of the people of this country to their own internal resources. And in viewing these resources, we perceive with pride, that there is no country on earth, which in the fertility of its soil, the extent and variety of its climate and productions, affords the means of national wealth and greatness in the measure they are enjoyed by the people of the United States. If these means are properly fostered and encouraged by a liberal and enlightened policy, we shall soon be able not only to defend our independence at home, (which however, I confidently trust, we have *now* both the ability and the disposition to do, notwithstanding the fears that are attempted to be excited on this subject,) but we shall be able to protect our foreign commerce against the united power of the world. One great object of the system I am about to propose, is to unlock these internal resources—to enable the citizen of one part of the United States, to exchange his products for those of another, and to open a great internal commerce, which is acknowledged by all who profess any skill in the science of political economy to be much more profitable and advantageous than the most favored external commerce which we could enjoy. The system, however, has another object in view not less important.

The people of the United States are divided by a geographical line into two great and distinct sections—The people who live along the Atlantic on the east side of the Allegany mountains, and who compose the three great classes, of merchants, manufacturers and agriculturalists ; and those who occupy the west side of those mountains, who are exclusively agriculturalists. This diversity and supposed contrariety of interest and pursuit between the people of these two great divisions of country, and the difference of character to which these occupations give rise, it has been confidently asserted, and is still believed by many, will lead to a separation of the United States at no very distant day. In my humble opinion, sir, this very diversity of interest will, if skilfully managed, be the means of producing a closer and more intimate union of the states. It will be obviously for the interests of the inte-

rior states to exchange the great surplus products of their lands, and the raw materials of manufactures for the merchandise and manufactured articles of the eastern states; and on the other hand the interests of the merchants and manufacturers of the Atlantic will be equally promoted by this internal commerce and it is by promoting this commerce, by encouraging and facilitating this intercourse—it is by producing a mutual dependence of interests between these two great sections, and by these means only, that the United States can ever be kept together.

The great evil, and it is a serious one indeed, sir, under which the inhabitants of the western country labor, arises from the want of a market. There is no place where the great staple articles for the use of civilised life can be produced in greater abundance or with greater ease. And yet as respects most of the luxuries and many of the conveniences of life, the people are poor. They have no vent for their produce at home; because, being all agriculturalists, they produce alike the same articles with the same facility; and such is the present difficulty and expense of transporting their produce to an Atlantic port, that little benefits are realised from that quarter. The single circumstance, of the want of a market, is already beginning to produce the most disastrous effects, not only on the industry but upon the morals of the inhabitants. Such is the fertility of their lands, that one half of their time spent in labor is sufficient to produce every article, which their farms are capable of yielding, in sufficient quantities for their own consumption, and there is nothing to incite them to produce more. They are therefore, naturally led to spend the other part of their time in idleness and dissipation. Their increase in numbers, and the ease with which children are brought up and fed, far from encouraging them to become manufacturers for themselves, puts at a great distance the time, when, quitting the freedom and independence of masters of the soil, they will submit to the labor and confinement of manufacturers. This, sir, is the true situation of the western agriculturalist. It becomes then an object of national importance, far outweighing almost every other that can occupy the attention of this House, to inquire whether the evils incident to this state of things, may not be removed, by opening a great navigable canal from the Atlantic to the western states; and thus promoting the natural connexion and intercourse between the farmer and the merchant, so highly conducive to the interests of both. This brings me more immediately to the object of the resolution which I shall have the honor to submit. And I must beg the indulgence of the House while I attempt to shew, by a geographical detail, not only the importance but the practicability of such a navigation.

The great ranges of mountain continued from the circular mountain in Georgia on the south, to the Mohawk river in the state of New-York, on the north, intercept and destroy the navigation of all the rivers which discharge into the Atlantic and approach the western country. But when you have passed these mountains from the Atlantic, that country opens a scene of natural internal navigation unequalled in the world. The face of the country is so uniformly level as to make almost every small stream, by which it is intersected, navigable for boats of considerable size. The chain of western lakes, extending from the north eastern extremity of lake Ontario to the south western termination of lake Michigan, affords now an excellent navigation, for vessels drawing ten feet of water, of fourteen hundred miles in extent—uninterrupted, except by the falls and rapids of Niagara, a distance of only eight miles. To the south and west of these lakes the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi approach within short distances of, and are interlocked by the waters of the lakes. The lands along these dividing waters are generally level; and the rivers are navigable and might be connected by short canals at little expense. I will mention some of the principal points at which these connexions might be formed.

On the south western part of lake Erie, in the state of New York, there is a portage of eight miles from that lake to a small lake, called the Chatauqua. The Chatauqua is the reservoir or source of one of the branches of the Allegany river, and this stream is navigable from the lake to Pittsburg, on the Ohio, for boats of thirty tons burthen. The waters of the Chatauqua are higher than those of lake Erie, to which there is a gradual and regular descent of land; and a canal might be opened between them at a very moderate expense.

On the south side of lake Erie, in the state of Pennsylvania, there is another portage of 15 miles over an artificial road, from Presque Isle to French creek, another branch of the Allegany, and which is also navigable for boats carrying 200 barrels. Over these two portages was sent, during the last summer, more than 100,000 bushels of salt, manufactured in the interior of the state of New-York, and transported through lakes Ontario and Erie, across these portages and down to Pittsburg, for the use of the inhabitants of the Ohio and its tributary streams. This salt trade was commenced about seven years ago, and has been increasing ever since at the rate of twenty five per cent. a year: And if the great line of navigation, to which I shall presently call the attention of the House, were opened, the people of the Ohio, and its various waters, would be supplied with that great and necessary article of life, fifty per cent. cheaper than it now costs them.

About 100 miles to the west of Presque Isle, in the state of Ohio, the river Cayohaga opens a good boat navigation from lake Erie to within six or eight miles of the navigable waters of the Muskingum; and I understand that a communication is about to be opened between them, either by means of a canal, or an artificial road, under the patronage of the legislature of that state.

About 150 miles still further to the west, in the territories of Michigan and Indiana, other communications may be formed between the waters of the Miami of lake Erie, and the Wabash and Miami of the Ohio.

At the south western extremity of lake Michigan, the most inconsiderable expense would open a canal between the waters of that lake and the Illinois river, one of the principal branches of the Mississippi. Nature has already made this connexion nearly complete; and it is not uncommon for boats, in the spring of the year, to pass from the lake into the Illinois, and from thence by the waters of the Illinois and Mississippi to New-Orleans, without being taken out of the water.

Further to the north, a connexion might be formed with nearly the same facility between the waters of the Fox river which discharges into Green Bay, and the Ouisconsing, another branch of the Mississippi; and the lands adjacent to these rivers are said to be uncommonly rich and fertile.

From this view of the western country and the great extent of its natural internal navigation, we perceive the advantages to be derived by opening it to the Atlantic by a great canal: and we discover also, at the same time, that it is not very important to the inhabitants, by what line this canal approaches them, as their interests would be almost equally promoted by any route that might be adopted. I presume, however, there can be no doubt on this point.

The Allegany mountains have a uniform elevation of about three thousand feet above the level of the tide. Their bases, together with those of their parallel ridges, occupy a distance, transversely of about one hundred miles. They present a barrier to the opening of any continued navigation from the middle states to the western country, which, if not beyond the reach of art, it is certainly far beyond that of our present national resources to surmount. An inspection of the map will at once point out this leading fact. To unite the highest navigable waters on each side of the mountains, by good roads, is all that can for some years, and perhaps for some centuries be attempted; and very valuable communications may be opened in this way.

To the south and west of these mountains, the river Mississippi affords an invaluable *descending* navigation to the inhabitants of the vast countries which it traverses: But, such is the

great extent of that river, and the uniform rapidity of its current, that great doubts are entertained whether it can ever be made a valuable *ascending* navigation. It certainly cannot, in the present state of the science of navigation, even with the improvements of the *steam boat*. To the north, still more important difficulties present themselves in the navigation of the St. Laurence. One of these is found in the great rapids of that river, and another in the severity of the climate, which is such as to shut up the mouth of the river with ice, for six or seven months in a year. The only practicable route for an ascending navigation to the lakes, is by way of the Hudson and Mohawk, in the state of New-York, the Hudson being the only river whose tide waters flow above the Blue Ridge, or eastern chain of mountains. The Mohawk rises in the level lands of the western country, in the vicinity of Lake Ontario, from whence it takes an easterly direction for about a hundred and forty miles near to Albany, the seat of government of the state of New-York, where it passes around the northern extremity of the western chain of Allegany mountains, and falls into the Hudson. From thence the two rivers united take a southerly course, and breaking through the east chain of mountains, commonly called the Blue Ridge, at West-Point, fall into the Atlantic at New-York. The Hudson is navigable from New-York to the mouth of the Mohawk, a distance of a hundred and seventy miles, for sloops drawing from eight to ten feet of water. The Mohawk is a river of respectable size, and for most of its distance deep and navigable ; but its navigation is occasionally interrupted by falls. A canal of any extent may be made along the margin of this river, and supplied with its waters, as high as Rome, which is one hundred and twenty miles from its mouth. From Rome a canal of one mile and an half in length, over lands which do not rise more than nine feet above the bed of the river, will connect it with the waters of Lake Ontario, down which the canal may be continued (about sixty miles) to the lake. The highest elevation of this canal at Rome, would be less than four hundred feet above the tide waters of the Hudson, and less than two hundred above the surface of Lake Ontario. The whole expense of this canal from the Hudson to the lake, is estimated by the secretary of the treasury, in his very able report to the Senate of April, 1808, on the subject of roads and canals, at 2,200,000 dollars : and I will take the liberty to recommend to the members of this House the perusal of that report, as containing a fund of the most useful geographical and other information, which, on every subject of political economy, that gentleman is so eminently qualified to impart.

From the place where this canal would connect with Lake Ontario, there is a ship navigation of two hundred miles to the falls

of Niagara. A canal with locks sufficiently large for the vessels that navigate the lakes, might be opened around these falls, at an expense, estimated by the secretary of the treasury at one million of dollars. From the Niagara river there is again a ship navigation to every part of lake Erie. It is presumed that a canal might be opened from lake Erie to the Ohio, for the sum of five hundred thousand dollars, and another canal cut around the falls of the Ohio, for the like sum of five hundred thousand dollars: And from the falls of the Ohio there is a good navigation of near two thousand miles to the gulf of Mexico. And thus, sir, for the sum of 4,200,000 dollars, a great circum-navigation might be formed, embracing the principal part of the United States and their territories; and connecting in its course, by navigable waters, the whole of the western and Atlantic countries. This canal would open to the navigation of the Atlantic on the lakes alone, (inclusive of lake Superior, the navigation to which is now obstructed by a short rapid in the river St. Marys, which connects it with lake Huron; but which obstruction might be removed by an expense of thirty or forty thousand dollars): I say, sir, it would open to the navigation of the Atlantic, on the lakes alone, a coast of between five and six thousand miles, of as fine and fertile country as any in the world. And it would open on the Mississippi and its various waters, a country not less fertile and still more extensive. How many hundred millions of dollars such an operation would add to the solid wealth of the western country, I will not venture to conjecture: But, sir, I may well say, that there is no work in the power of man, which would give such life, such vigor, such enterprize and such riches to the citizens of that country, as the execution of this canal. The inhabitants near the lakes would have a direct communication to and from New York, by means of the canal, and the effect of it would be to double the price of their produce, and to add three or four hundred per cent. to the value of their lands The people of the Ohio and Mississippi would descend with their produce to New-Orleans and to any port on the Atlantic, from whence they might return with the articles received in exchange by way of Hudson and the lakes to their own homes. The idea of benefiting the people of the Ohio and Mississippi to any great extent by this northern navigation may perhaps at first appear visionary; but I can state it as a fact, that even at this time, under all the disadvantages of that route, goods may be transported from the city of New-York, by the way of the Hudson and the lakes to any part of the Ohio, and to all those parts of the Mississippi above its confluence with the Ohio, at as cheap a rate as they can be transported from any port on the Atlantic, by any other route. The effect of opening this navigation would then be to reduce the

price of transportation to those parts of the country at least fifty, and probably seventy-five, per cent. Another important advantage, independent of the general commerce of the lakes, would be felt in the reduction of at least fifty per cent. in the price of salt. The salt springs in the state of New-York, are within a few miles of the proposed line of circumnavigation, and are connected with it by a navigable river. This article may be manufactured at those springs in sufficient quantities for the whole of the population of the United States, and it is now sold there for twenty five and thirty cents a bushel: but such is the present expense of transportation that it sells in the Pittsburg market for two dollars a bushel. If the effect of opening a canal navigation were only to reduce the price at Pittsburg to one dollar, it would make a saving on the quantity *now* sent to that market of one hundred thousand dollars a year. But, sir, aside from all the pecuniary benefits I have mentioned, the great political effect of this work would be—by opening extensive communications, encouraging intercourse, and promoting connexions between the various ports of the Atlantic and Western states, to subdue local jealousies, and to bind the union together by the indissoluble ties of interest and friendship.

There may be some, sir, whose fears to do any thing which shall diminish the national resources, may incline them to reject this system of internal improvement at the first view, on account of the magnitude of its expense. Let me ask these gentlemen to give themselves the trouble to trace the consequences of this system on the public wealth, and they will soon be satisfied that there are no possible means by which the aggregate value of the landed property of the United States could be so certainly increased, as by the application of part of these lands to the purposes of opening the great inland navigation which I have before described. The immediate and necessary effect of which would be, to enhance the value of the remaining part to an almost inconceivable extent.

I have been somewhat conversant with the interests of the great private land holders of the western country. They are a class of people whose sagacity in discovering and industry in pursuing the means of accumulating wealth are not to be questioned. When they undertake the sale and settlement of wild lands, there is no policy so well understood or so generally adopted as that of opening easy and extensive communications, through the different parts of their lands, and of facilitating the approaches to them, by means of good roads. And for every dollar they expend in these roads, or indeed, in almost any other public improvement, they are sure to be remunerated three or four hundred *per cent.* in the increased value which is thereby given to their lands.

The United States are owners of about 250,000,000 acres of land in the western country, independent of Louisiana. More than 100,000,000 acres lie in the vicinity of the lakes. The public lands occupy a coast on the lakes of more than 2600 miles in extent, inclusive of the navigable streights by which they are connected; but exclusive of the numerous and extensive islands, abounding, more or less, in all of them. Taking thirty miles in breadth along this coast, will give about 50,000,000 of acres of public land, the most remote of which is within thirty miles of the navigable waters of the lakes. A canal might be effected from the Atlantic to the lakes, by an appropriation of 1,000,000 of acres to that object. And this not by an actual sinking or sacrifice of the price of the land, but by a conversion of it into canal stock; which stock would, in all probability, be more productive and more valuable than the land itself. And the effect of opening this navigation would be to enhance the value of the remaining 49,000,000 some hundreds per cent. The value of land must depend upon the value of its produce, or, to speak with more precision, upon the profits which this produce will yield to the agriculturalist. To shew the effect of opening this navigation on these profits, I will instance the article of wheat, which is one the great staple articles of the lake country, and is produced there with great certainty and in greater perfection than in any other part of the United States. The average price of a bushel of wheat on the lakes, is fifty cents. This depression of price is owing solely to the present expense of conveying it to market. It costs from 75 to 100 cents to transport a bushel of wheat from the lakes to New York, which is its nearest American market. If a canal were cut from the Hudson to the lakes, there can be no doubt, but it would reduce the expense of transportation from 75 and 100 as low, at least, as 25 cents; and the effect would be to add the saving in transportation to the price of the article, and wheat would then be worth on the lakes, one dollar instead of fifty cents a bushel. But it costs the farmer from 30 to 40 cents to produce a bushel of wheat. When, therefore, he sells for 50 cents, his profits are only from 10 to 20 cents. Whereas, if he could sell for one dollar, his profits would be from 60 to 70 cents. The effect then of opening this navigation would be to increase the profits of the farmer from four to six hundred *per cent.* and the value of land ought to rise in the same proportion. But suppose it should only double the value of lands (and this is an effect cannot be doubted) what would be the result as respects the property of the United States? Why sir, the 50,000,000 of acres on the lakes, which are now worth 50.000,000 of dollars, would immediately become worth one hundred millions. And thus, besides performing a great and imperious duty, which, as a government, we owe to the people

of the western country, we should by this operation, as mere proprietors of the soil, and in a matter of pecuniary speculation, advance the public property fifty millions of dollars.

But, sir, there are some gentlemen who are friendly to this system of internal improvement, but who think the present time inauspicous to such an undertaking, on account of the reduced state of the treasury.

To this objection, I would answer, *first*, that the means by which it is proposed to carry on these improvements, are such as are not calculated to make any sensible impression on the revenue: And, *secondly*, that the bare increase of the sales of land, which would be effected in consequence of undertaking these works, would more than supply the drains on the treasury in constructing them. I do not know that I can demonstrate the truth of this last position to the satisfaction of the House; but there is not the shade of a doubt on my mind, but the mere undertaking of a great canal from the Atlantic to the lakes, under the auspices of the general government, would, in a very short time, cause the sale of more land, than would be sufficient to accomplish the whole of the improvements, contemplated in the bill before the Senate.

The expense of executing the whole of the works enumerated in that bill, is estimated at sixteen millions of dollars. This is not a mere random estimate of my own. It has been formed from the best information which the secretary of the treasury has been able to collect on this subject, by a gentleman, (Mr. Latrobe,) who, as an experienced, and scientific engineer, is confessedly superior to any other in this country. The estimate was intended to be a liberal one, and to shew the *maximum* price which the works could cost. If the United States were to be interested one half these works, their subscription would amount to eight millions of dollars. The proposed plan, however, does not contemplate the payment of the principal sum out of, nor to make it chargeable upon, our ordinary revenue: But it provides that when monies shall be wanted to carry on these internal improvements, certificates shall be issued from the treasury, bearing an interest of six *per centum*, redeemable eventually out of the proceeds of a particular tract of land set apart to be sold for that purpose. These certificates may be sold in market, or they may be immediately applied to the purposes for which they shall be issued.

Suppose then that the whole of these works were to be undertaken immediately, and completed within ten years; and suppose too that no monies should be received from the sales of the hypothecated lands. The calls on the treasury would then be,

	Dollars.
For the first year,	48,000
2nd.	96,000
3rd.	144,000
5th.	240,000
10th.	480,000

which sum of 480,000 dollars is the interest of the whole principal sum of eight millions. And this, sir, would not be a very large sum, compared to the magnitude of the object, and to the extent of our revenue ; especially when it is considered that, after one year from this time, and before the effect of such an appropriation could be felt, our revenue will be relieved from the payment of two millions of dollars, and after two years, from the payment of four millions of dollars annually, in consequence of the reductions which will then have taken place in the principal of the national debt.

But it is to be presumed that not more than one third of these works would be undertaken immediately, and that these will be completed before any others are begun. The works, as fast as they shall be completed, will be drawing a toll equal at least, it is presumed, to the interest of the money they cost ; and in this way the treasury will be relieved from the payment of that interest. Upon this calculation, the United States would never have to pay, in any one year, a greater sum than the interest of one third of the principal sum of eight millions of dollars ; and in this case, the calls on the treasury would be (supposing again that no aids were derived from the sale of lands) as follow :

	Dollars.
For the 1st year,	16,000
2d.	32,000
3d.	48,000
5th.	80,000
10th.	160,000

the highest sum called for in any one year.

Let us now see what will be the probable amount of the sales of land, within a given period, to forward the execution of these improvements.

The present population of the United States is estimated at seven and an half millions. It is well ascertained that our population doubles once in twenty three years ; and it certainly is increasing, at this time, in as high a ratio, as any former period. According to a calculation of Mr. Elodget, (in his statistical tables) something more than one third of the increasing population of the United States is constantly migrating to the western country. One third of the increased population, (or that portion which will migrate) for the next twenty three years will amount to two and an half millions. But suppose that only two millions

should emigrate, and that only one million of these should settle on the public lands. This population would require 50 millions of acres, or fifty acres to each person, which is about the average quantity taken by new settlers: and it would bring into the treasury, in the space of twenty three years, the enormous sum of one hundred millions of dollars, upon the supposition that the whole of the land should be purchased at the *minimum* price of two dollars an acre. It is probable, however, that it will sell much higher; and, if so, the aggregate amount of the sum will be increased in proportion to the increase of the price.

Such a demand for new lands may appear extravagant to those who have not attended to the progressive population and settlement of the United States for the last twenty years. A moment's recurrence to a few well known facts on this subject, will shew that such a demand is not only probable, but that, unless some great national calamity befall us, it is certain. The population of the state of New York has considerably more than doubled, within the last twenty years. Upwards of fifteen millions of acres in the western part of that state, which twenty years ago formed a dreary and uninhabited wilderness, are now covered by settlements, and compose one of the most flourishing parts of the United States. Population and settlement have progressed nearly or quite, to the same extent in the northern and western parts of the state of Pennsylvania. That tract of country which now forms the state of Ohio, did not contain twenty years ago, one thousand inhabitants; and now it has a population of more than two hundred thousand. The great states of Kentucky and Tennessee have been almost wholly peopled within the same period; and it is not extravagant to say, that more than one hundred millions of acres have been actually purchased and occupied within the last twenty years in the western country.

It is true, sir, that the rate at which the public lands are now, and have been for some time past selling, is not such as to warrant the calculation I have made as to future sales; but the causes of these sales being so contracted are obvious. One principal cause, which however, will immediately cease to operate, because it is ceasing to be a fact, has been that the public lands were remote from the inhabited parts of the country. Settlements will always be regular and progressive. People accustomed to the pleasures and advantages of society, do not choose to remove far into the wilderness, when they can purchase lands in the vicinity of old settlements. Several of the individual states have held large tracts of wild land, which, being more contiguous to settlements, came of course first into market. But the lands of the individual states, especially to the northward, are now nearly all occupied. The state of New York, for instance, has but few new lands. Settlement in that state

has advanced to its western extremity. The same is the case with Pennsylvania—and the whole of the immense emigration from the northern and middle states, will be immediately pressing upon the public lands. Another reason for the paucity of sales is, that we have no lands in market calculated for this northern emigration. The lands on the lakes are shut up. We have no lands for sale further north, than the south part of the state of Ohio, and that is too low a latitude for most of the northern population.

Another impediment to the sales of public lands arises from the circumstance that you will receive nothing but specie in payment for them. The people who migrate to new countries are, with few exceptions, of the poorer class. They rarely have more than property sufficient to transport their families to their new places of residence; to construct a few temporary accommodations, and to subsist themselves and families until their farms become productive. They then calculate to pay for their farms by the produce of them. But the products of the public lands in their present occluded situation, will not command money, and settlers are therefore deterred from purchasing. If, instead of confining the payments to money, you were to undertake this system of internal improvement, and issue paper to enable you to execute it, and make this paper receivable at the land offices, the additional facilities which this would afford to payments would not only bring back this paper into the treasury, but large sums of money with it. To shew the effect of such a policy, I need only refer to a comparative view of the sales of public lands during the time when the evidences of the public debt were receivable in payment for lands, and the sales which have taken place since that period.

The salaries in the year	1803,	amounted to	199,080 acres.
	1804,	ditto	373,611 do.
	1805,	ditto	619,236 do.

During the whole of this time the public paper was receivable in payment. The amount of sales was increasing near one hundred per cent. yearly, and would probably have continued to increase in the same ratio to this time, had the same quantity of public debt been kept afloat, and had it continued to be received at the land offices. But, sir, in April, 1806, a law was passed prohibiting the further receipt of the public debt in payment for land: And the consequence was that the sales diminished,

In 1806	to	473,217 acres.
1807	to	284,180
1808	to	195,579
1809	to	143,409

The sales thus retrograding in amount, in about the same ratio in which they had before advanced, and this for no other assignable cause than what that law furnishes.

But, sir, the grand, and all important operation by which only you can make extensive and effectual sales of the public lands, is to open the produce of them to market, and in this way to make them pay for themselves. Do this, and not only settlers, but monied men will become purchasers. There are now thousands, and I may venture to say millions of dollars in the northern states, ready to be invested in the lands on the lakes, the moment a value shall be stamped on them, by the certainty that they will be speedily opened to the navigation of the Atlantic. Let the United States and the state of New York, undertake a canal from the Hudson to the lakes; and, so far from draining your treasury by the operation, it will give you in five years, I pledge my reputation on it, an overflowing treasury. There can be no mistake about this business, sir, it is a matter of plain calculation.

The government of the state of New York have long seen the advantages of such a navigation; and they have been for several years desirous of undertaking this canal. They wait only in the expectation that the general government will aid them in this great work; and this is certainly a just and reasonable expectation, inasmuch as the work would benefit the property of the United States to a much greater extent than that of the state of New York.

The present time, far, in my opinion, from being unpropitious to the undertaking of this measure of internal improvement, is peculiarly fortunate. The great commercial capitals which have been thrown out of employment by the stagnation of foreign commerce, are now idle, and might be engaged in these improvements by a little attention on the part of government: and if they could be so engaged, they would continue to give support to a vast number of our sailors and other laborers, who have hitherto been employed in the subordinate occupations of commerce, but who have also been thrown out of employment by the stagnation of that commerce.

If I had not already drawn too largely upon the time of the House, I could point out other advantages resulting from this system of improvement, not less important than those I have mentioned. I could shew that it would bring into the treasury, perhaps some millions of dollars yearly, by the increase of duties on imports. The great additional quantities of produce which would be thrown into market through these roads and canals, would be exchanged for foreign merchandise, which is subject to heavy duties, and from which most of our present revenues are derived. I could shew also the great advantages which, in a military point of view, would result from these improvements. If the United States were to be engaged in a war, we are equally vulnerable, and equally liable to be assailed, at half

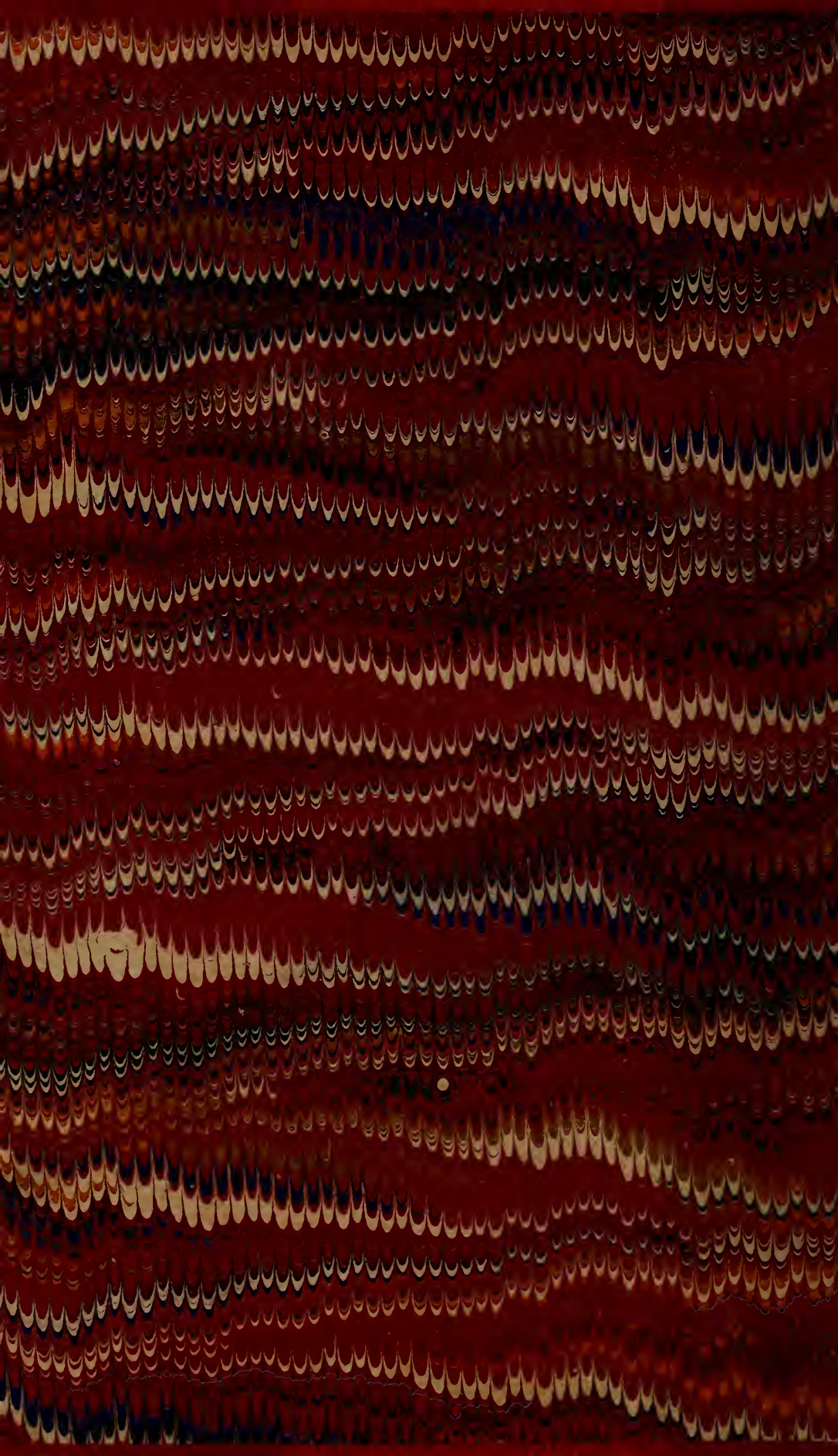
a dozen different points, some hundreds and even thousands of miles distant from each other; and it would be impossible to carry on any vigorous military operations, without the aid of good roads and canals to transport over such distances the immense quantities of arms, ammunition and provisions necessary to the supply of a great army. It is sufficient, however, that I suggest these arguments, and they will be properly appreciated by the House.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is one other point of view, in which, although an unpleasant one, I feel it my duty to present this subject to the House; and this regards not only the means of improving that great source of national wealth, the public lands, to the best advantage; but it involves the practicability of enjoying it at all. The people, who have purchased and settled on your new lands, are already your debtors to the amount of some millions of dollars: and in as far as they are your debtors, they are (to use a phrase perhaps somewhat too harsh) a species of enemy; and we have already seen to what a formidable extent their power and numbers are increasing. It is far from my intention, sir, to cast any injurious imputions on the character of these settlers. On the contrary, I know that they are not to be distinguished from the great mass of the yeomany of this country; among whom is to be found most of the real patriotism, as well as the real strength of the nation. It is on them that we are to depend for the security and permanence of our republican institutions. It is to them that this government must resort for protection and support, in every great and dangerous crisis. I say, sir, that I am not about to impeach either the honesty or the patriotism of these settlers; it is their interest and their wish to pay their debts, and to discharge all their duties to government as good and faithful citizens. But let me ask you, sir, let me ask any man of common observation, who has attended in the least, to the situation of the western country, how it is possible for these settlers to pay you fifty or an hundred millions of dollars in specie, when they have no other resources than in their agriculture, and when the produce of this agriculture will not bring them money enough to buy their whiskey. It is impossible, sir, and if you intend to hold those lands, much more if you intend to make them a source of public revenue, you must furnish the means of making them productive, by opening them to market. Every motive of interest and policy unites in urging the government to undertake this system of internal improvement. It is a subject too vast to be accomplished by individual enterprise. The means of the citizens of the western country are peculiarly inadequate to such an undertaking. They cannot construct canals for the very obvious reason that they are already deeply in debt for their lands, and they must continue so until this great work

is executed for them. They will then not only be able to pay you for their lands, but they will remunerate you for the expense of opening canals by the tolls which they will be able to pay. In the advantages which these out-lets for their produce will give them, and on which their prosperity must so essentially depend, you will have a pledge for their future attachment and fidelity to your government, which they will never forfeit. But, sir, if you neglect to avail yourselves of the opportunity which this system affords, of securing the affections of the western people; if you refuse to extend to them those benefits which their situation so imperiously demands, and which your resources enable you, and your duty enjoins it on you to extend to them. If, while you are expending millions yearly for the encouragement of commerce, you affect constitutional doubts as to your right to expend any thing for the advancement of agriculture! If you can constitutionally create banks for the accommodation of the merchant, but cannot construct canals for the benefit of the farmer! If this be the crooked, partial, side-way policy which is to be pursued, there is great reason to fear that our western brethren may soon accost us in a tone higher than that of the constitution itself. They may remind us (as the people of this country once did another power, equally regardless of their interests) of the rights with which the God of nature has invested them, by placing them in the possession of a country which they have the physical power to defend; and which it is to be feared they would defend against all the tax-gatherers we could send among them, supported by all the force of the Atlantic states.

It is unpleasant, sir, to be obliged to press considerations of this sort, on the attention of the House. Disagreeable, however, as they are, they are not on that account the less important, and ought not to be disregarded. If you would attach the affections of the western people to your government, you must attach them by their interests. You must appear among them, not in the light of their creditors merely, but as their guardians, their protectors, as the promoters of their welfare. If you avoid all communication with them except what arises out of your relations as creditors, and go among them only to collect their money, be assured that this is an intercourse which they will soon break off. You have seen how effectual an opposition, a few settlers in the north part of Pennsylvania have been able to make to the authority of that great state: and you have seen in a more recent instance, the difficulties which a handful of *squatters* have opposed to the power of another great state, the state of Massachusetts—and from these examples you may well calculate the effect of an opposition from the host of settlers who are covering your new

I am under great obligation to the House, for the attention which I have received during this long discussion; and I will not trespass any further. In the various aspects in which I have presented this system of internal improvement, I have considered it, principally, in reference to the effects which it is calculated to produce on the western country, because in that point of view, I consider it not only most important, but least understood. I have not gone into a particular examination of the benefits to be derived from the proposed canals and roads along the Atlantic, not because I do not think them important, but because this part of the subject is as well, and perhaps better, understood by the members generally than by myself. For the same reason, I have not gone into any minute calculations to shew the superior cheapness and safety of canal transportation, over transportation by land. That point is fully illustrated in the report of the secretary of the treasury to which I have before alluded. I believe however I have said enough, and more than enough, to satisfy the House of the importance of the subject, and of the propriety of referring it to a committee. This great system, so necessary, in my opinion, to the welfare of this country, is not a measure of speculative or doubtful utility. Its advantages are great and palpable; and the accomplishment of it perfectly within the reach of the resources of the nation. I have not been induced to bring forward this resolution by any personal considerations; but I have done it in obedience to a great duty which I owe to my constituents. So far from being a project confined to myself, or even to a few individuals; the proposition, which I now submit, carries with it the anxious wishes, and the best hopes of a large and respectable portion of the population of this country—and permit me to hope, sir, that their expectations may not be disappointed.



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